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Global Influences and Resistance Within: Inclusive Practices and South Africa's Apartheid Government

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GLOBAL INFLUENCES AND RESISTANCE WITHIN: INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND SOUTH AFRICA'S APARTHEID GOVERNMENT

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Introduction

For over forty years South Africans were governed under apartheid rule, "separate development of the races" (D'Amato, 1966) segregating all aspects of society according to race. The white, minority population controlled governmental power and enjoyed economic prosperity at the expense of 80% of the (black) population. Black South Africans suffered from established oppression resulting in extreme poverty, joblessness, poor health care and medical facilities, under funded schools, and limited access to education. Government sponsored free education for white, coloured (mixed race), and Indian South Africans, while a fee was imposed on black (indigenous) South Africans (Gwall-Ogisi, Nkabinde, & Rodriguez, 1998).

Marginalized groups within the black community suffered even more greatly. Individuals with disabilities, especially black individuals with disabilities, were victims of discrimination against their race and physical and/or cognitive limitations. For example, the segregated black communities were frequently located beyond easy access to health and social services, requiring alternate transportation. Public transportation was not accessible for individuals with physical disabilities, and taxis often refused to pick up individuals with disabilities or charged more. As a result, black individuals with disabilities did not receive appropriate medical attention (Cock, 1989).

In 1994 the apartheid rule of South Africa crumbled and the black majority assumed democratic leadership of the country. The new government developed a Constitution of the Republic of South Africa with a Bill of Rights in 1996, "that

entrenches the rights of all South Africans, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture or language, to basic education and access to educational institutions" (Engelbrecht, 2006, p. 254). From the outset the government instituted an education policy designed to promote and extend an inclusive community.

With the formal development of inclusive policy after the fall of the apartheid, naturally such policy included equal rights for people with disabilities. Yet, inclusive trends related to disability began well before the end of apartheid. The exclusionary apartheid government developed committees and initiated research devoted to the rights of individuals with disabilities, specifically related to special needs education. An advocacy organization of individuals with disabilities, Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA), formed at least ten years before the break up of apartheid. Interestingly, similar developments relating to the rights of people with disabilities appear around the globe. However, South Africa's unique, formally segregated society creates an exceptional struggle for inclusion that goes beyond disability.

The Problem

The disability rights movement of South Africa follows a distinctive and documented timeline tracing the global and homegrown influences. While the achievements of the movement must be highlighted as influential in the struggle for special education services for all, it is difficult to make a cause-effect relationship between the two because of the focus on adult services of the disability movement.

During apartheid rule, the South African government addressed the needs of students with disabilities as they did education for the general population: providing free

and compulsory, segregated education for white students and requiring black families to pay for optional education. Services for black students with disabilities were primarily provided by religious groups and non-governmental organizations (Gwall-Ogisi, Nkabinde, & Rodriguez, 1998). Yet, beginning in the 1980's there is an apparent shift in the educational ideology of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) demonstrated in shifts in language and attempts to research and study the educational inequalities plaguing the nation, including the failures of special needs education.

This study will analyze these educational initiatives along with concurrent United Nations' documents and the backdrop of the political climate and grassroots struggles in the Republic of South Africa in order to demonstrate the interrelationship of international and local influences in the area of special needs education. As this study will make evident, the language of RSA policy and research during this ideological shift is clearly influenced by international trends, yet the catalyst behind the government projects cannot be divorced from the local pressure to reform the segregationist apartheid structures. This analysis is organized by time period beginning with the 1940's-1950's; then 1960's-1970's; and finally 1980's and 1990's.

Each section will examine the language of documents relating to people with disabilities and special education presented by the United Nations along with documents from the Republic of South Africa during that time period. The United Nations' documents were chosen as representative of international trends because of the possibility of the far-reaching influence of their standards. As Jack Donnelly suggests, "the very existence of international standards may have a positive impact, particularly on governments concerned with their international reputation…"(1981 p. 654). The

declarations of the UN create an international language and assist in shaping "international public opinion" (Donnelly, 1981, p. 654). Therefore, this report refers to the United Nations' documents to illustrate international trends of the time.

In order to understand the influence of the United Nations' standards and declarations in the Republic of South Africa, this study will examine the language in the report of the *National Conference for Handicapped Persons* of 1952, *The Freedom Charter*, *The White Paper on Education* of 1983, the Constitution of 1983, and the report of the *Education for the Black Disabled of 1987*. The author will compare and contrast the language used in these South African documents with the international trends illustrated in the UN documents.

Beyond the aforementioned policy and reports, the author will attempt to provide a backdrop for the creation and initiation of such research and policy by the apartheid South African government. This will be done first, by describing the structure of the educational system under apartheid rule for those with and without disabilities during each time period. Next, the author will illustrate the grass roots movement on the ground by telling the story of the disability rights movement beginning with the student violence of Soweto and the creation of the Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA), the first inter-racial advocacy group in South Africa founded by disabled persons. This information is gathered from a variety of sources including the book *Nothing About Us Without Us*, written by William Rowland, a leader in DPSA and the movement. This book is comprised of first-hand accounts of disabled people directly involved in the struggle for disability rights in South Africa during apartheid. Such description will highlight the political unrest in South Africa as a result of the apartheid rule and demonstrate the local

tensions facing the apartheid government as they began attempts to create a more inclusive educational system.

The combination of the three areas of analysis: the UN documents, the South African reports and policies, and a description of the disability rights movement will provide a basis for an analysis of the international and local tensions influencing South Africa's apartheid government in relation to education policy for students with disabilities. This study will argue that the governmental actions were influenced by international standards but that the attempts to reform came from internal pressure associated with the struggle for racial equality.

Throughout the text the labels used for people with disabilities will be analyzed and compared. When generally referring to individuals with disabilities, the author will use "person first language," the practice currently used in the United States. When discussing the language in documents, initiatives, and policy, the reference will reflect that time period to highlight the changes and trends in the use of language.

When referring to people with disabilities, language can be analyzed in two ways: one to reflect the time period; and, two to reflect the social perception of the person with a disability. In this document, the language analysis will focus on similarities and differences based on the time in which the language is used. In early years disability was addressed from a medical model, focusing on the individual's problem as it deviates from the norm (Coleridge, 1993). According to Petra Engelbrecht, "This approach locates the source of the deficits within the individual, justifies social inequalities because of biological inequalities…" (2006, p. 256). Beginning in the 1980's disability issues reflected a social model in which the environment and attitudes surrounding disability

create the issues and barriers for people with disability. The problem moves beyond the individual to society and the environment (Cock, 1989). This shift in understanding of disability unites people with disabilities, as it creates a common struggle for access at a larger level (Moodley, 2006). Early language of disability associates disability with charity, while later language reflects empowerment (Coleridge, 1993).

Early Initiatives: 1948-1960

United Nations Resolutions/Declarations

The documents put forth by the United Nations, since its inception, attempt to formalize the fundamental rights of individuals in order to spread a global understanding of freedom and humanity. It is important to note the Republic of South Africa's (RSA) clear opposition to the UN perception of equality as demonstrated in their establishment of the apartheid government. While there is no direct connection between these initial UN declarations and RSA policy, they provide a broader picture of the trends of international inclusive language and policy.

The inclusive terms of UN declarations, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, are clear in that no person is excluded from "equal and unalienable rights," (1948). Therefore, it can be assumed that individuals with disabilities are part of the "human family" of which the Universal Declaration refers.

Yet, in 1959 the United Nations, with the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child,* acknowledges the special rights of children to be cared for and nurtured. Article 5 of that declaration, states that children with disabilities, referred to as "handicapped", deserve "special treatment, education, and care". The language accentuates the dependency and difference of children with disabilities, yet includes education as a fundamental right.

One year later, the UN held a *Conference Against Discrimination in Education* (1960). While exclusion based on disability or ability level is not specifically noted in the list of discriminations in education, the conference report promotes free and compulsory education for all. The targeted areas of inequity directly relate to the segregated apartheid education system. The conference promotes equal access, standards, and conditions of education, all of which contrasts with the apartheid's education system preparing the black majority for a life of servitude or manual labor (Nkabinde, 1993). Thus, the South African government demonstrates its independence from international trends in their educational structure.

Handicapped Persons in the Republic of South Africa

People with disabilities had been recognized in South Africa long before the rise and fall of the apartheid government. The early twentieth century saw the creation of National Council for the Blind, The Blind Persons Act and The National Council for the Care of Cripples in South Africa. Schools, specifically for children with sensory impairments (i.e., blindness and/or deafness), were established by religious and other non-governmental organizations. They provided segregated and unequal services to black and white children (Gwall-Ogisi, Nkabinde, & Rodriguez, 1998).

Special education law for the white population became official in 1948 with the Special Schools Act. While this document could not be attained by the author, Petra Engelbrecht describes its effects in her 2006 article, additionally Sigamoney Naicker references it in the 2006 journal article, "From Policy to Practice: A South-African Perspective on Implementing Inclusive Education." Naicker describes how the "Special Schools Act…introduced into special education a medical and mental diagnosis and

treatment model" (2006, p. 3), thus treating the child according to his/her individual deficits, rather than attempting to modify the system or environment to meet his/her needs (Naicker, 2006). Additionally, Engelbrecht states that the Special Schools Act "…had the effect of legitimizing exclusionary practices, affirming the status and power of professionals and creating the belief amongst teachers that teaching children with disabilities is beyond their area of expertise" (p. 256). The Special Schools Act became law eleven years before the United Nations' *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, yet both documents reflect the medical model approach to disability in education suggesting the international acceptance of this approach during this time period.

In 1952 a *National Conference on Handicap Persons* was held in the Republic of South Africa. "Holism in Rehabilitation" was the theme and focused primarily on adults with disabilities. Perpetuating the medical model of disability at the time, surgeons and medical professional top the list of attendees, yet discussions centered around employment and integration of persons with disabilities into society. Delegates were to "find a solution to the problem of assisting the handicapped person to take his place in the community and avoid becoming a parasite to the nation" (p. 6). Such a statement portrays the handicapped person negatively as a burden, for which the able-bodied of the nation must figure out the solution. Yet, this statement deviates from the idea that handicapped persons are helpless beings merely to be cared for as the medical model is described by Naicker and Fulcher and related in the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child.* The professionals at this conference expect handicapped persons to contribute economically by becoming productive members of society.

This was a conference of professionals speaking and making decisions on behalf of handicapped persons. Similar to the early UN documents, the conference addresses disability in terms of medical rehabilitation, yet, unlike the UN, the RSA strives to eliminate dependency. Handicapped people in South Africa are a financial burden on society and need to contribute to the economy of the nation with gainful employment. Employment is not just a right for people with disabilities, but an obligation.

The conference continues to address issues unique to the Republic of South Africa. In his speech at the conference, Dr. C.W. Wright explains how the United States' and Great Britain's categorization of handicapped people is unsuitable for the RSA, "In our multiracial society today we can ill afford to create another classification by statute and legislation to segregate persons suffering from vocational or employment handicap" (*National Conference for Handicap Persons,* 1952, p. 127). This demonstrates the heightened awareness of the apartheid structure across society as well as hints of resistance to further segregation.

Regardless of the hints of resistance to further classification of persons based on their disability, South Africa's special education system of the time reflected the American model, which separated students in the education system according to their disability (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001). In doing so, South Africa created a uniquely segregated special education system, in which children with disabilities were categorized and separated according to both race and disability (Muthukrishna and Schoeman, 2000).

Politics on the Ground in South Africa

The political atmosphere on the ground during this time in South Africa is best demonstrated through analysis of the 1955 *Freedom Charter*. This document reflects the

resistance movement against the apartheid government. Although the *Freedom Charter* does not specifically address the inclusion of people with disabilities or special education issues, it is important to analyze the inclusive language of the movement for democratic freedom in order to understand the connection between the fight for inclusion of people with disabilities and the struggle against apartheid.

The Congress of the People, consisting of supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) developed the *Freedom Charter* in 1955. According to the Gandhi-Luthuli Documentation Centre, (http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/HIST/freedomcharter/freedomch.html), "The Congress of the People was not a single event but a series of campaigns and rallies, huge and small, held in houses, flats, factories, kraals, on farms and in the open." The culmination of the aforementioned events took place on June 25-26th of 1955 when delegates met and adopted the *Freedom Charter*, declaring South Africa "belongs to all who live in it, black and white…" (*Freedom Charter* 1955). This initial statement of the charter sets the inclusive tone of the document.

The charter addresses all areas of inequality established by the apartheid government including: participation in government, living conditions and housing, employment, and education. The charter declares, "The rights of the people shall be the same regardless of race, colour, or sex." Therefore, individuals with disabilities, as South African people, shall have equal rights as well. Under the statement *All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!* the charter states, "The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship, and to educate their

children." Hence, those fighting against apartheid believe not only that education is a human right, but that *all* have a right to access it.

Furthermore, stating "Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children," in the section *The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened!* connects the struggle for equal rights in education to the fight for freedom from apartheid. In the ten areas of inequality addressed in the charter the aforementioned is solely dedicated to education, demonstrating the priority of the democratic movement to create equal opportunities in education. With the use of such inclusive language as "all people" throughout the *Freedom Charter* there is no need to specifically mention disability or special needs education. As people of South Africa, people with disabilities appear a part of the fight for equal rights against the apartheid regime.

The 1960's and 1970's

International Trends

In 1971, the United Nations set the stage for a broad acceptance of disability as a welfare and rehabilitation issue in the *Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons* (#2856), "assuring the welfare and rehabilitation of the physically and mentally disadvantaged." The reference to individuals with physical disabilities in a declaration focused on people with cognitive disabilities (mental retardation) highlights the prejudices of the time which stereotype all people with disabilities as unable.

The declaration puts forth the progressive theme of "integration" of people with disabilities into activities of "normal life," including education, work and family living. However, whenever stating those inclusive rights a disclaimer is inserted. For example, the first right listed for Mentally Retarded Persons states, "The mentally retarded person

has, to the maximum degree of feasibility, the same rights as other human beings." It is entirely reasonable to acknowledge that individuals with cognitive disabilities may need support exercising their rights, but the language utilized by the United Nations creates a wide opening for interpretation of the rights allowed to mentally retarded persons. With that statement, countries could deem education for individuals with disabilities infeasible.

This declaration includes education in a list with medical care, physical therapy, and rehabilitation reflecting the medical model approach to disability of the time. While it is stated as a right for the mentally retarded person, there is no special emphasis on educational services or accommodations, which would spark the development of special education for individuals with disabilities.

A language shift takes place a few years later as shown in the 1975 United Nations' *Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons.* This document extends the rights from 1971, providing more specific and concrete rights. The disclaimers continue to be inserted, yet resemble more closely the terminology used today. The language used is positive and direct, "Disabled persons shall enjoy all the rights without any exception…" (United Nations A/RES/30/3447, 1975).

Embedded in the language is a philosophical shift toward a more self-reliant understanding of disabled persons, focusing on equal "civil and political rights" and "economic and social security." The voice of the disabled persons is valued as organizations of disabled persons are to be consulted, according to this declaration, "in all matters regarding the rights of disabled persons" (United Nations A/RES/30/3447, 1975). Subsequently, the UN developed a resolution in 1976 calling for an *International Year of Disabled Persons,* which will take place in 1981. The year would focus on encouraging

nations in efforts to integrate disabled persons in society, work, and education; provide accessible buildings; and develop prevention strategies.

The State of Schools in the RSA

Prior to examining the events of the latter half of the twentieth century in the Republic of South Africa, it is important to understand the proposed purpose of the educational racial segregation of the time. In 1953 the central government took control of the education of the black population and passed an Education Act, commonly referred to as the Bantu Education Act (Gwalla-Ogisi, Nkabinde, & Rodriguez, 1998). Prior to 1953, the education of the native population fell into the hands of missionaries (Macquarrie, J.W., 1960).

The Bantu Education Act established the legal separation of the races within an unequal educational system. The curriculum instituted for each racial group reflected the hierarchical structure of the apartheid philosophy, prioritizing white education while using school to prepare black students for a life of inferiority and servitude (Gwalla-Ogisi, Nkabinde, & Rodriguez, 1998). Black students only were offered classes in cleaning, weaving, claywork, needlework, scrapwork and gardening, at the primary level (D'Amato, 1966). At the secondary level white students had the choice to follow "a strictly academic course or the general or practical courses, while the Native children do not have the option to follow the strictly academic course" (D'Amato, p. 69, 1966).

There was no expectation of a separate, but equal structure. The distinctive quality of native culture and the RSA society at large made equal curriculum and educational systems irrelevant (Paasche, 2006). In a speech in 1954, after the creation of

the Bantu Education Act, Dr. Verwoerd, former Prime Minister and psychologist, addressed the Senate:

> If the native in South Africa today in any kind of school in existence is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake…There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open…it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze…uneconomic…also dishonest…disrupting the community life of the Bantu and endangering the community life of the European, (p. 205).

This South African educational system explicitly contradicts all the UN lays out in its *Conference Against Discrimination in Education*. The system values the European citizen over the native by providing the white children free, compulsory education. The black students are not required to attend, and if they do they must pay for it (Macquarrie, 1960). The majority of educational funding is spent on white schools, R91 per black student and R740 per white student (Marcum, 1982), while black schools are under-funded and overcrowded. In 1957 teachers averaged forty to fifty students per classroom in the native schools, white classrooms averaged half that amount (Macquarrie, 1960). Teachers in the native schools instructed primary students using the native language, while high school teachers taught in the official languages, Afrikaans and English (Kallaway, 2002).

Students with disabilities suffered from the same racial discrimination established with the Bantu Education Act as students without disabilities. Yet the inequity was compounded by the categorical system for special needs education established during this time (Muthukrishna & Shoeman, 2000). Despite the discussions at the *National*

Conference for Handicapped Persons, South Africa created a special education system that labels individuals based on their category of impairment and separated them from their peers.

The majority of black students receive little to no services in this categorical system (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001). Nkabinde (1993) reports that in 1966 approximately 1,140 black students with cognitive, physical and/or sensory impairments received services in nine special schools and by the late 1980's black students received services in 35 special schools. However, due to the urban location of these schools (Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000) and lack of funding, resources and teachers' ability to identify and support mild disabilities, it is estimated that 600,000 black students with disabilities received inadequate support in the general classroom or did not attend school at all (Nkabinde, 1993; Gwalla-Ogisi, Nkabinde & Rodriguez, 1998).

This proved a dismal situation for black students with disabilities in South Africa, as their education remained low on the priority list of the apartheid government. However, in the late 1970's and early 80's the struggles of individuals with disabilities became a larger political issue after student protests 1976 in Soweto turned violent, leaving thousands injured, many of whom remained permanently disabled. Thus, the plight of disabled persons in South Africa grew politically charged (Rowland, 2004). The protests in Soweto spread throughout South Africa, sending the government a strong message of resistance to the educational structure.

Soweto

In 1976 black students fought against the established inequity of the South African school system. In the town of Soweto, students staged a protest aimed at the

language policy of "Bantu" education. The government responded with force. Police were called in and the protest turned violent. Unarmed students were injured and killed. This incident spurred widespread protests and school boycotts throughout the native provinces of South Africa (Mafeje, 1978).

The students of Soweto, along with the bands of other students from throughout South Africa who joined them, sent the government a clear message of discontent with the current system. As a result hundreds of South Africans were seriously injured and disabled, placing them in another category of discrimination in which to struggle. Rowland, a white disabled man and key figure in the disability rights movement, states in *Nothing About Us Without Us* (2004), "the rising militancy all around from the fight against apartheid, spilled over into the disability rights movement and gave it its liberation aspect," (p. 162). Therefore, it is difficult to separate the disability rights movement from the fight against the apartheid government or the fight for equal education.

1980's and 1990's

International Year of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action

In a General Assembly session of 1982 the United Nations adopted the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (WPA), resolution 37/52, a direct result of the International Year of Disabled Persons, 1981-82. This United Nations proposed to address disability with three actions: "prevention, rehabilitation, and equalization of opportunities" (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/diswpa01.htm, p.1) with a focus on disability as human rights concern.

The WPA utilizes impairment, disability and handicap throughout the document, but defines them (according to the World Health Organization) as distinguishable terms:

> Impairment: Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function.
> Disability: Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.
> Handicap: A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social, and cultural factors for that individual (p.1).

An impairment is the medical diagnosis of the issues, the disability is the function of that impairment as related to the norm (and rarely used in this document), and a handicap refers to the environmental and social barriers faced by the disabled person. It is noted that "disabled people do not form a homogenous group."

Unlike previous UN documents dealing with disability concerns, the WPA states that all countries, developing and developed, bear the same responsibility and "urgency" to improve the conditions and provide equal opportunities for their disabled citizens. South Africa's economic and developmental state does not exempt them from participation in the WPA. As stated in the WPA, it is the responsibility of the government of each nation to develop and provide services for disabled persons.

While the WPA establishes three areas of concern, the central theme of the document is the development of equal opportunities for disabled persons in all aspects of society. Expanding upon the promotion of inclusion, the WPA also acknowledges the obligations of disabled people. They are contributors to society and the economy, not charity cases meant to live off of government funding. It is the responsibility of the government to create opportunities to utilize the untapped skills of disabled persons.

Ultimately, the World Programme of Action firmly establishes issues with disability as a societal concern, moving away from the medical model approach to disability, while also promoting individual agency and advocacy. The WPA goes so far as to say that "service personnel with whom disabled people come in contact fail to appreciate the potential for participation by disabled people in normal societal experiences and thus do not contribute to the integration of disabled individuals…" (p.5). Disabled persons must be viewed as active participants in society and governments, in turn, need to make society accessible for all.

Education Initiatives by the Apartheid Government in the Early 1980's

In the wake of the Soweto riots, the South African government instituted changes attempting to address the issues of the student protesters. For example the term "Bantu" was no longer used for official documents beginning in 1978 (Paasche, 2006). A few years later in 1983, the government issued two important documents: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the *White Paper on the Provision of Education in the Republic of South Africa*. This section will focus on the concurrent theme of these two documents to create a racially separate, but more equitable system of government and education in South Africa, thus demonstrating the divergence from the United Nations' statement in the 1960 *Conference Against Discrimination in Education* asserting that separation of educational services based on religion or linguistics is only permitted if,

> The establishment or maintenance, for religious or linguistic reasons, of separate educational systems or institutions offering an education which is in keeping the with the wishes of the pupil's parents or legal guardians, if participation in such systems or attendance at such institutions is optional… (p. 4).

As will be demonstrated below, students in South Africa had no choice but to enroll in racially segregated schools.

In the 1983 Republic of South Africa Constitution it stated the leaders "Are convinced of the necessity to standing united and pursuing the following national goals… To protect and respect the human dignity, life, liberty and property of all in our midst…To respect, to further and to protect the self-determination of population groups and peoples" (http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/83cons.htm, 1983). The government presented an inclusive tone at the outset of the constitution and utilizing the phrase "protect the self-determination of population groups" promotes freedom within the segregated structure.

However, further into the document, evidence of the inequality of apartheid remained with the establishment of voting rules: "Every White person, Coloured person, or Indian…shall… be entitled to vote at any election of a member of the House of Assembly, the House of Representatives and the House of Delegates" (#52, *Republic of South Africa Constitution of 1983*). Furthermore, "No person shall be qualified to be a member of a House under this Act unless he- (a) is qualified to be included as a voter in any list of voters of the House in question…" (#53, 1983). Black South Africans were denied voting rights, and therefore, could not be elected to the three Houses of government.

Further, in an attempt to address the language issue the government established that the official languages of the nation would continue to be English and Afrikaans, although "Self-governing black territories may provide for the recognition of one or more Black languages…as an addition to the official languages, for use for official purposes"

(#89, 1983). While the government seemingly attempted to establish equality for all population groups, as stated in the opening of the Constitution, the meat of the document reflects a continuation of a separate, unequal institution.

In 1980 the Republic of South Africa commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to investigate all aspects of the national educational system. Following the investigation, the HSRC, an independent research organization, presented the government with a report, upon which the government commented, made changes and created the *White Paper on the Provision of Education in the Republic of South Africa* in 1983.

The 1983 *White Paper on the Provision of Education* reflected the hypocrisy of the Constitution, and blatantly dismissed the United Nations' *Conference Against Discrimination in Education* of 1960 by the insistence on segregation of the population groups in education. For example, *Principle 1* of the *White Paper* states, "Equal opportunities for education, including equal standards in education, for every inhabitant, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex, shall be the purposeful endeavour of the State," (p. 3). Similar to the Constitution, *The White Paper* continued previous segregationist policy, "the Government reaffirms that it stands by the principles of the Christian character and the broad national character of education as formulated in…the National Education Policy Act, 1967, in regard to White education and as applied in practice…in regard to the other population groups" (section 3.1, p. 4). The Principles set out in the opening of the document seem to promote educational reform to a more equal system, yet the government insisted on maintaining the current structure.

The previous point is demonstrated in section 3.3:

> The Government reaffirms that, in terms of its policy that each population group should have its own schools, it is essential that each population group should also have its own education authority/department. The need for co-ordination is recognized, but this policy will have to be duly taken into account in any proposals relating to structures for central co-ordination and cooperation between the educational structures for the various population groups, and also in any proposals relating to educational structures at the regional or local levels. Education departments of their own are also essential to do justice to the right of self-determination which is recognized by Government policy for each population group (p. 4).

The language utilized allows the government to place all responsibility on the local governments of the population groups. The *White Paper* reflects the government's belief in the inherent differences amongst population groups and allowed for inequalities. Because the national government bore no responsibility at the local level, success and failure will be a result of the efforts and "self-determination" of each population group.

The *White Paper* addressed services for students with disabilities in the *Provision for children with special needs* (section 7.12). "The educational activities of churches, welfare organizations, private initiative and other interested bodies should be stimulated and supported…to establish an educational infrastructure for children with special educational needs" (p. 38). The use of the term, "children with special needs" reflects the person-first language beginning to be utilized in international circles, however the government promotes the support of outside agencies and organizations to provide educational services to students with disabilities. There was no call for reform of the current system or acknowledgment of the lack of provisions for black students with disabilities. The UN's World Programme of Action called on governments to bear the responsibility for providing for disabled individuals, NGO's can assist governments "by formulating needs, suggesting suitable solutions and providing services complementary

to those provided by governments" (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/diswpa01.htm, p.1). The South African government, with the *White Paper*, continued to give primary control of special education to outside organizations and took on the supportive role.

Throughout the *White Paper* the government utilized rhetoric of equality. They will create a system, provide funding and establish policy, while local bodies bore the responsibility to implement and manage education. The proposed educational structure described in the *White Paper* did not address how the steps they would take to correct the unequal structure. The government continued to justify the segregation of the population groups and defy the UN's *Convention Against Discrimination in Education* with separate education facilities based on race.

South Africa's Disability Rights Movement and the DPSA

While the government reaffirms the racial segregation of apartheid with the 1983 Constitution and the *White Paper on Education*, the movement for democracy grows. The political action on the ground, specifically related to disabled people, is best studied through analysis of the Disability Rights Movement in South Africa. As will be demonstrated, the movement has international ties, but the local fight for democracy provides the connection to the local situation which fuels the struggle. In the introduction to his book, *Nothing About Us Without Us*, William Rowland, a disabled man, disability activist and first Chairperson of the DPSA, states, "the disability rights movement in South Africa was part and not the least part, by any means, of the liberation struggle in the country. We were part of the resistance, we became part of the chaos and today we are helping to strengthen our new democracy" (2004).

The roots of the disability rights movement in South Africa can be traced to the Self-Help Association of Paraplegics (SHAP), created by Friday Mavuso, a black, paraplegic man who was disabled during the violence in Soweto. The increased number of disabled individuals, as a result of the Soweto riots, found themselves in devastating situations without access to healthcare, employment, mobility equipment, housing, or transportation (Cock, 1989; D'Aubin, 1991). SHAP created economic opportunities for black disabled people by building a factory in which to work, called the Self-Help Factory, and through continued efforts to make business connections (Rowland, 2004; D'Aubin, 1991). Mavuso stated (cited in D'Aubin, 1991), "The members (of SHAP) told us that if they had access to work and money, then this would help them to solve other problems in their lives." Thus, he developed the Self-Help Factory, created and managed completely by disabled individuals (D'Aubin, 1991).

SHAP personified the calls for economic independence from the *National Conference on Handicapped Persons* twenty years prior, and went beyond the appeal for "consultation" with disabled persons echoed in the United Nation's rhetoric. The individuals involved in SHAP did not take action because others gave them the right, they knew they deserved the right and they fought for it. In an era of gross racial discrimination and excessive unemployment amongst all black citizens, SHAP developed an opportunity for economic independence. SHAP empowered disabled people to band together, demonstrate their abilities, and demand freedom.

The empowerment displayed by the SHAP creators and employees gained attention. The government-controlled, racially-segregated media at the time searched for "good-news stories, (because) the townships were effectively burning" (Rowland, 2004,

p. 140). Upon discovering SHAP and the Self-Help Factory, the media returned several times making Friday Mavuso the spokesperson of the disability rights movement in South Africa. SHAP spread its influence across the country, inspiring disabled people to travel to Soweto, train at SHAP and create similar organizations in their town (Rowland, 2004).

Concurrently to the creation of SHAP, white disabled people began organizing themselves and participated in congresses to stand up to the discrimination facing them daily. While they, too, experienced issues with accessibility and poor education, the discrimination faced by white disabled people differed from those of black disabled South Africans. Their congresses focused on issues of inadequate education, self-advocacy, segregation from society, parking and accessibility issues and sexuality and disability (Rowland, 2004; Howell, Chalklen & Alberts, 2006). Black disabled individuals' issues were compounded by racial inequality, creating struggles against non-existent, rather than inadequate services. Both black and white disabled individuals were organizing themselves during this time; black individuals through SHAP and white individuals created congresses. In an interview with Mike DuToit, a disabled disability rights activist at the time (in Rowland, 2004) he describes how the white disabled groups encouraged the black disabled to participate in their congresses. In doing so, the joined forces created the advocacy group, Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA) in 1984. The DPSA became the voice of disability rights in South Africa and was the first interracial, cross-disability advocacy group run by disabled people in South Africa (Howell, Chalklen & Alberts, 2006).

While the formation of SHAP and the collaboration of black and white disabled individuals to form DPSA exemplify the local roots of the disability rights movement in

South Africa, the movement's international ties cannot be ignored. Without the organization and activism of disabled people in South Africa already in place, the DPSA would not have formed with the strength and inclusiveness that it had. Yet, the spark to form an advocacy group in order to organize the local struggle is rooted in the understanding of the international fight for disability rights (Howell, Chalklen, & Alberts, 2006).

The story of Mike du Toit, a white disabled South African and member of the Quadriplegic Association of South Africa at the time, describes the international ties to the South African disability rights movement. He attended a conference for the advocacy group Rehabilitation International (RI) in Winnipeg, Canada in 1980. The attendees included disabled people and professionals in the field of disability from around the globe, including both developed and developing countries (Rowland, 2004). Howell, Chalklen and Alberts expand on the internationally historical implications of this conference, where disabled people from across the globe attending the conference walked out after their demand that half of the Board of RI be made up of disabled people was denied. The protesting group branched off to create their own advocacy group, Disabled People International, which would become the umbrella organization of the Disabled People of South Africa (2006).

Du Toit, an attendant of this conference, believed the collaboration with many others with disabilities, and the empowerment displayed by those who walked out, provided "a fundamental change in perspective" (Rowland p. 138). Those influential people described the successes of the disability rights movements in their countries, inspiring du Toit to bring those ideas back to South Africa. Soon after Friday Mavuso,

already a leader amongst black disabled people, began collaborating with du Toit and the connections were made to create the DPSA (Rowland, 2004).

The international spark and influence is clear, yet the success of DPSA must be attributed to the climate of South Africa. "While international events influenced…the set up of DPSA, the organizations' roots…the issues it would take up and programme of action were strongly formed by the experience of being disabled in South Africa" (Howell, Chalklen & Alberts, 2006, p. 49). The DPSA's history, as representative of disabled people of South Africa, includes attempts to work with and struggles against the apartheid government. As described below, the relationship with apartheid and the fight for liberation plays an important role in understanding the uniqueness of the struggle for disability rights in South Africa.

At the outset of the congresses and the organization of the DPSA, the disabled people, both black and white, associated their discrimination and in some cases, their disability, with the apartheid government policies and actions (Rowland, 2004; Howell, Chalklen & Alberts, 2006; Cock, 1989). Kathy Jagoe (cited in Cock, 1989) states:

> while we [disabled people] find barriers to equal accessibility in architecture, transport, negative attitudes, employment, education and health care…nowhere do we find a larger, more pervasive, nor insidious barrier to equal access in our society than in apartheid…And however much we dismantle other barriers, we will fail to address the problems of the majority of disabled people in South Africa until we dismantle apartheid, (p. 19).

Disabled people in South Africa, both black and white, fought for integration and inclusion, but refused to be "integrated into an unjust/unequal society" (Howell, Chalklen,& Alberts, 2006, p. 51). Therefore, their efforts had to be aligned with the liberation movement (Rowland, 2004; Howell, Chalklen & Alberts, 2006; Cock, 1989).

The DPSA participated in demonstrations and conferences aimed at liberation from apartheid, making disability a visible piece in the struggle. In one instance, disabled people marched up Soweto Hill in a campaign against the heightened violence (Rowland, 2004). Organizations for liberation began recognizing the DPSA, they joined the Patriotic Front Against Apartheid. In the beginning the government did not pay much attention. They refused to recognize the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 nor the International Decade of Disabled Persons 1982-92 because of the UN sanctions against them and "antipathy towards the United Nations" (Rowland, 2004, p. 158). Yet, disabled people protested and organized a national conference to celebrate in their own way, (Rowland, 2004).

After dismissing the UN's International Year and Decade of Disabled Persons in 1981, in 1986 the South African government declared their own Year of Disabled Persons. The government made a political decision to draw attention away from the ensuing violence. Thus the DPSA collaborated with the apartheid government to organize a conference related to the Year of Disabled Persons as well as spearhead research focused on individuals with disabilities (Howell, Chalklen,& Alberts, 2006; Rowland, 2004).

The conference was designed to "show commitment to equal opportunities" (Howell, Chalklen, & Alberts, 2006, p. 55). The government prohibited political discussions at the conference. As the concerns of disabled people could not be separated from the political issues of the country, conflict arose and members of DPSA walked out of the conference leaving behind a humiliated RSA (Howell, Chalklen,& Alberts, 2006). The members reluctantly returned after William Rowland presented "a very strong

statement attacking policy, citing the health conditions and poverty of the people" (Howell, Chalklen, & Alberts, 2006, p. 55). The government refused to admit the critical role apartheid played in the heightened discrimination disabled people experienced (Howell, Chalklen, & Alberts, 2006).

The issues at the conference did not prevent the government from developing committees to conduct research regarding people with disabilities. One particular study, *The Education for the Black Disabled*, focuses on the education of individuals with disabilities. The initiation of such research demonstrates an attempt, beyond the *White Paper of 1983*, to address the educational inequalities present in the apartheid system, particularly for black individuals with disabilities. An analysis of the language in these documents, presented below, demonstrates an understanding of the international trends of the time, yet the unique situation in which the government and disabled students find themselves in apartheid-ruled South Africa.

Education Initiatives by the Apartheid Government in the Mid- to Late 1980's

***Education for the Black Disabled,* 1987**

As a result of the Year of the Disabled Person in South Africa, the government created the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on Disability (ICCD), which commissioned research on areas of disability and discrimination the country. While little has been found in the way of policy change influenced by the ICCD, this body created as many as thirty-seven reports/documents including a commission of, *Education for the Black Disabled*, by the HSRC in 1987 (Howell, Chalklen, & Alberts, 2006). The creation of the ICCD and their subsequent areas of investigation demonstrate the government's attempts to address the inequity entrenched within the educational system, or possibly

appease those demonstrating against it, as the research analyzes the inadequate, and at times non-existent, educational services for black students with disabilities.

The language used throughout the report reveals an understanding of international trends developing at the current time, while reflecting the unique situation of black disabled students in the Republic of South Africa. The document states on p. 10, " It has become a matter of interest to the Republic of South Africa to implement the principle of equal educational opportunities, also for black impaired students as soon as possible" (HSRC, *Education for the Black Disabled*, 1987). In the overview for the UN's World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, " 'Equalization of opportunities' is a central theme of the WPA and its guiding philosophy" (http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=23). *The Education for the Black Disabled* emphasizes the "equal opportunities" called for in the WPA, yet focuses on black students to address the racial inequities present in the current system.

Unlike the *National Conference for Handicap Persons* of 1952, this report includes the opinions of all key players in the education of disabled students, including teachers, parents, and the disabled students themselves. The researchers presented their findings at conferences and included the aforementioned principles in panel discussions, the results of which are included in the report. Such a strategy mirrors the move from the medical model to a social model of disability more widely accepted at the time (Moodley, 2006) and promoted in the UN's World Programme of Action, in which the context of disability becomes the focus, rather than looking to the individual as the problem.

The forward of the report expresses the important and multifaceted nature of the research presented. The black South African culture provides a unique context in which

the researchers are attempting to gather information on disability and education. While not using the term *apartheid*, the researchers do not shy away from the inequities, seen in some instances as non-existent services, of the educational system, particularly for the black disabled students. "Education and training for the black impaired student have fallen far behind owing to socio-political-historical events and views," (HSRC, 1987).

Although the title utilizes the term "disabled" as the label for individuals with disabilities, "impaired" is used more widely throughout the text, which strays away from the terminology employed by the United Nations at the time. As noted in the WPA, *impairment* refers to the medical diagnosis, *disability* refers to the function of the impairment. UN documents tend to utilize *disability* more commonly; conversely, South African documents use *impairments*. Yet the terminology for disability soon becomes irrelevant in this South African report. As the researchers address their findings, it is clear they are presenting a picture of the discriminatory and unequal education system black students, and by default black impaired students, are forced into.

The issues black impaired students face, are primarily a result of the racial inequity of the system. For instance, Finding 2 speaks to the need for "Equal education for all." This comes directly from the *White Paper of 1983*, it continues by stating that, based upon, "the democratic premise that all human beings are basically equal" (HSRC, 1987, p. 14). The apartheid government made claims in 1983 to develop equal opportunities for education of all population groups while maintaining the segregated schools. This report not only calls the government out on the lack of progress, but highlights the *democratic* ideology of equality.

Ultimately, the report addressed issues in special education services in South Africa similar to those found globally at the time, yet it notes that the concerns of black students in South Africa call for unique measures beyond global definitions. For instance the problem of labeling students with disabilities according to their category of disability is a common point of discussion. The researchers report the use of the "AAMD's (American Association of Mental Deficiencies) classifications of mental retardation" (HSRC, 1987, p. 43). However, they note the problems with transferring labels and definitions, such as "environmental impairment" to the South African educational system. This report observes the relative and contextual nature of the term, stating it "should be reconsidered." Continuing, the researchers claim most black students could be considered "environmentally impaired" due to the "poverty and cultural otherness" (p. 61). The RSA could not transfer categorical systems and apply them to their own because of the social structure of the country.

The UN's World Programme of Action focuses on three areas: "prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities" for individuals with disabilities (37/52, 1982, p. 1). Listed in the HSRC's recommendations in the *Education for the Black Disabled* are: "Prevention of Impairment, Early Identification, Intervention for the Impaired, Parent Counseling, and Comprehensive schools for the impaired to bring them in contact with unimpaired students" (p. 79). All of these recommendations fit into the WPA's initiative.

However, the researchers point out the problems not only in the current research, but in implementation of any recommendations. The basic needs of the education system, for impaired black students in South Africa, proves difficult to assess at the time

of the report. Many black students did not attend school because it was not compulsory and "the current unrest in black townships has totally disrupted school attendance in some cases" (p. 69). Black impaired students, especially those with less visible disabilities and moderate to severe cognitive disabilities, received little to no services (HSRC, 1987). While the report addressed the need for integration of impaired students with their non-disabled peers, an example of "equalization of opportunities", the point is moot if students are not present in school at all. With the inclusion of information regarding the non-compulsory schooling and non-attendance due to unrest in the schools, the researchers are highlighting the problems with the school system as a result of the apartheid structure.

The *Education for the Black Disabled* utilized an understanding of the international trends of the time to make critical observations of the services, or lack thereof, for impaired students. They lag far behind developed nations in their provision of services for impaired students (HSRC, 1987), but the racial inequality of the system remained the priority. As *The Education for the Black Disabled* points out, the RSA must correct the injustice of the entire system. Impaired black students deserve equal educational opportunities as all students do, there is "no need for a separate philosophy of education for impaired black children" (p. 189); yet it is not disability alone that hindered their educational services.

Conclusion

The apartheid government's attempts to address the needs of individuals with disabilities with the creation of the ICCD and its subsequent research were short-lived. The ICCD was dissolved in 1991, thus eliminating any connection between the DPSA and the apartheid government (Howell, Chalklen, & Alberts, 2006). The purpose of analyzing the history of special education and disability rights in South Africa during the apartheid rule is not to expose any heroic effort on the part of the apartheid government to promote equality for individuals with disabilities in a segregating society. The intention was to examine the local efforts for disability rights at the grassroots and governmental level in comparison to international trends in order to uncover the unique struggles individuals with disabilities faced under apartheid rule.

At first glance the trends of rhetoric in South Africa regarding disability follows the international trends, moving from the medical model of disability exemplified in the dominance of professionals in the *National Conference for Handicapped Persons* of 1952; to a more social model as shown in the research methods of the *Education for the Black Disabled* of 1987. Similarly, the term *disabled/impaired* comes to replace *handicapped.* However, the backdrop of the political tensions during the time of such change calls into question the purpose of such action.

The *Freedom Charter* provides a description of the political resistance to the apartheid government in the early years of its rule. The *Charter* utilizes inclusive language that promotes the rights of *all* of the citizens of South Africa. The government mirrors such language in the *Constitution* of 1983 when it states their aim "To protect and respect the human dignity, life, liberty and property of all in our midst…"

(http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/83cons.htm, 1983). However, upon further examination, the use of the word *all* does not denote integration, only serves to acknowledge each population group with the intention of maintaining segregation. The report of the Disability Rights Movement in South Africa serves to accentuate the unique struggles of disabled people during apartheid, their involvement with the fight for democracy and the international connection to the movement. Mike Du Toit states (in his interview in Rowland, 2004) "It was much easier…to have the impact we did in a situation of general change and revolutionary thinking" (p. 153). The impact of the disability rights movement was far greater because of the atmosphere of transformation in South Africa at the time.

Although the committees formed and research initiated by the apartheid government did not eliminate the segregation in society nor create elaborate changes in policy, the connection of the disability rights movement to the liberation movement created a politically active and empowered population of disabled individuals. This report draws attention to the complexities of the fight for disability rights and the government initiatives surrounding the topic during the apartheid era, by tracing the international influences and local stimulus. The results of the local efforts of the disability rights movement in South Africa could not take effect until the collapse of the apartheid government and did so with the inclusion of people with disabilities in key areas of government (Rowland, 2004).

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